

2645
RATIONAL RELIGION
RECOMMENDED;
OR, A
CAUTION
AGAINST THE
EVILS
ATTENDING THE WANT OF
Understanding in *Religious Matters*:

A SERMON,
PREACHED AT THE
VISITATION
OF THE
Most Reverend the Lord ARCHBISHOP of
CANTERBURY,
In CLIFF CHURCH,
On FRIDAY, the Fifth of JULY, 1776,
And inscribed, by PERMISSION, to his GRACE.

By THOMAS DAVIES, A. M.
VICAR of GLYND.

L E W E S:

Printed by WILLIAM LEE, 1776.

And Sold by the AUTHOR, and PRINTER; JAMES LAMBERT,
in the CLIFF; Mr. JOHNSTON, in AVE-MARIA-LANE; and
Mr. ROBSON, in BOND-STREET, LONDON. [Price 6d.]



T O T H E

Most Reverend Father in God,

F R E D E R I C,

Lord ARCHBISHOP of
CANTERBURY,

T H I S

D I S C O U R S E,

WITH ALL

DEFERENCE AND RESPECT,

IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS GRACE's

MOST DUTIFUL SERVANT,

Thomas Davies.

Most Reverend Father in God,

THE BISHOP

of ARCHBISHOP

CANTERBURY



DISCOVERED

WITH A

DESCRIPTION AND REFERENCE

TO THE

BY HIS GRACE

MOST DUTIFUL SERVANT,

Thomas Dorman

PSALM ci. v. 2, *old Translation.*

*O let me have Understanding in the way
of Godliness.*

IT is the distinguishing glory of our nature, that we are endued with reason, intelligence, or understanding. This spirit in man the wise King calls properly *the candle of the Lord*, which, in different degrees, enlightens every one that comes into the world; and by it we are to regulate our conduct in life. But the exercise of our understanding, or reason, is by no means to be confined to the business of this world only. As we have sufficient evidence to believe, that we are intended for another and nobler state of existence than the present, it certainly must be of the greatest importance to us, to have our reason well exercised and informed in the concerns of that future world, or, in the words of my text, to *have understanding in the way of Godliness.*

B

Hereby

Hereby we shall consult in the best manner our safety and satisfaction.

There are few satisfactions equal to that which an honest mind receives, from a clear, rational, and consistent view, and a steady and firm Persuasion, of the important truths of Religion, natural and revealed. To be assured, as we are, or easily may be, that ourselves, and all things about us, are produced by an infinitely wise and benevolent Being, who could have no other end in bringing into existence intelligent and free creatures, but to communicate happiness to them, and that in the most proper manner: To be persuaded that he continues to uphold all things for the same benevolent purpose, and that he supplies the wants of his various and numberless creatures by his never-failing bounty: To believe, on satisfactory evidence, that he is the ever present parent, and almighty friend of the righteous, the grateful, and the pious; that he is training them for perfection in goodness

ness and in happiness; that for this purpose he sent his only Son, as we are assured by the Christian revelation, to save the human race from sin and death, and to lead them, by precept and example, to virtue, piety, and life eternal: And to be farther promised forgiveness to the penitent; assistance to, and acceptance of, the honest and sincere; and, notwithstanding their many imperfections, admission after death, to a state of compleat, everlasting blessedness:—I say, clearly to discern the evidence of these great, noble, and interesting truths, and to have a full and firm persuasion of their reality, inspires a satisfaction, which elevates the heart of man, stirs him to the discharge of every duty, and tends to exalt him above the temptations of vice, the afflictions of life, and even the fears of death.

The evidences of these most comfortable and interesting truths are as abundant, as the truths themselves are important. They offer themselves to

the serious and attentive in a clear and striking light; and to employ our thoughts and attention, our reason and judgment upon them, is certainly the means to have *understanding in the way of Godliness*.

As our highest interests, our very best pleasures, and most noble satisfactions, herein concur, what farther inducements can we want to exercise our intellectual powers much and often on these things? There is, however, one consideration, which furnishes us with an additional encouragement to do so; and that is, that we may all of us gain a sufficient degree of *understanding in the way of Godliness*, if we will but apply our minds to learn its truths, and render its evidences familiar to our thoughts. All that is most important and useful in the doctrines of religion, is also most plain and level to our human capacities; and even those whose mental powers are weakest, if they be but honest, and employ the abilities they have, may comprehend so much of such clear truths

truths, as will render them safe ; for every man hath a sufficient capacity for his own final salvation : And we may be assured, that the righteous governor of the world will never condemn any man for not having what is not given him, but for not using well and improving what he hath. It is a careless and negligent inattention ; it is obstinate prejudice, pride, and passion ; it is too strong attachment to, and pursuit of, the enjoyments, amusements, and cares of the present life, that hinders, steps between, stops the free course of enquiry, and bars the entrance of religious truths into the mind.

We have the highest authority to rest this fact upon. We are taught by our blessed Lord, in his well-known parable of the sower, that it is in vain the sower scatters abroad the seed, if there be not a proper soil to receive it. If the land be hard like the beaten path, that the seed cannot penetrate it ; or if it be so shallow that it cannot take root ; or if it be so full
of

of weeds as to out-grow and choak it, there can be no harvest. By this plain and easy comparison we are clearly instructed, that in receiving moral and religious truths, there must be a right disposition of mind, a proper degree of attention, a desire to learn, and a freedom from passion, prejudice, and contrary cares; or else no doctrines, no arguments, no persuasions or instructions, can have a good and lasting effect: And therefore that it is a vain and useless attempt, to try to teach them that will not be taught; to argue with them who are determined not to be convinced; or to persuade them to any good who have no disposition to it.

But it is not only with such persons as these, the inattentive, the careless, those immersed in the cares of this life, or the too anxious pursuits of its enjoyments;—in a word, it is not only with the listless, ignorant, and worldly, that we are called upon to urge, and even to defend the use of our understanding

standing, in matters of religion. There are others who adopt and maintain principles highly derogatory of our intellectual powers, and of the goodness of the gracious giver of them; and who professedly deny the use of our reason or *understanding in the ways of Godliness*.

And here we are obliged to contend for the use of our intellectual powers in religious matters with very different sorts of persons: And though they may be far from agreeing in every thing, and their views and designs may be contradictory to each other, yet herein they agree, and seem perfectly to coincide, in degrading our reasoning faculties, and excluding them from the concerns of religion. According to the principles of these persons, Reason has nothing to do with Religion, either in settling its foundation, or in examining its nature, or ascertaining its meaning; nor has it any business in canvassing the evidence on which its truth is to be admitted, and its principles embraced.

The

The writings of many of the open adversaries of revealed religion will naturally on this head occur to your thoughts; and you will anticipate in a great measure what I may offer on the subject. It is notorious that some of the most artful, sly, and insinuating of the patrons of infidelity, have distinguished themselves in this respect.

One * is particularly well known, who borrowing the guise of enthusiastic sentiments, and the artful cover of devout expressions, hath made it his business to prove, that “ Christianity hath
 “ no foundation in reason or argument;
 “ that God never intended that we
 “ should use our understanding in mat-
 “ ters of faith; and that a reasonable
 “ belief of religious truths, founded on
 “ enquiry and conviction, is a false and
 “ unwarrantable notion.” Consequently
 he proceeds to affirm, in the language
 of a wild and senseless enthusiasm,
 “ that the Holy Ghost enlightens the
 “ souls of believers at once with an ir-
 “ resistible

* The author of *Christianity not founded upon Argument*.

“ resistible light from Heaven, that
 “ flashes conviction in a moment ;—
 “ that this infallible, internal light, is
 “ to abide with us to the end of the
 “ world, to be our sole guide to all
 “ truth ; so that those who are thus
 “ instructed by the Spirit, need no
 “ outward instruction, not even from
 “ the Scriptures themselves, nor con-
 “ sequently concern themselves about
 “ the credit of ancient miracles,
 “ or the genuineness of distant re-
 “ cords.”

Nothing can possibly be a more gross misrepresentation of the Scripture revelation, and of the matters of fact therein contained ; as hath been abundantly made manifest, to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced enquirer, by several able defenders of the Christian cause : and the absurd assertions of this insidious writer have been ably refuted and exposed. And this was the more necessary, as this composition was artful, and too well calculated to deceive the unwary.

This disguised method of attacking revelation hath since been adopted by succeeding Infidels, and hath been carried farther; for it hath been extended even to some of the fundamental principles of natural religion, particularly to the moral attributes of God.

A late noble author* on this side of the question insisteth, “ that the
 “ only attributes of the Deity that are
 “ necessary to be known by us, are,
 “ his power and wisdom.” He says,
 “ we rise from the knowledge of our-
 “ selves, and of the works of God,
 “ to a knowledge of his existence,
 “ his wisdom, and power.” He blames those, “ who presume to define the
 “ moral attributes of an all-perfect
 “ Being, particularly his goodness and
 “ justice, holiness and truth. And
 “ he calls it licentious reasoning to
 “ endeavour to form any judgment of
 “ those divine moral attributes, or
 “ ascribe to God something equiva-
 lent

* Lord BOLINGBROKE.

“lent to human notions.” The inference he would draw from all this is, “that we must not infer our moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, or propose to imitate him in these attributes.” But this he asserts in direct contradiction to our blessed Saviour, who sets the goodness of the Divine Being before us, as a noble pattern of extensive benevolence, and mentions God’s *causing his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending rain on the just and unjust*, as instances to engage us to *do good to all, even to our enemies themselves.* *Matt. v. 45, 48.*

Another thing this writer seems to have in his view herein, is, to destroy the argument drawn from the *moral attributes* of God, to shew the probability of a future state of retribution. And thus by discarding the sober use of our reasoning powers from investigating the truths of revealed religion, and endeavouring to place it on the false and uncertain foundation of fancy,

impulse, or imagination; these writers proceed to employ that reason, thus degraded, with all the arts of argument they are masters of, to overturn the great and fundamental principles of all religion, natural and revealed.

But such cavils and misrepresentations, since retailed by other imitators of these masters, have been thoroughly considered, and repeatedly exposed and answered, to the entire satisfaction of every one, who freely and impartially exercises his reason and *understanding in the way of Godliness*.

We shall pass on therefore from the avowed enemies of our religion, to consider the case of some of its false or deluded friends: And among these, the first sort that occurs to our view, as not having *understanding in the way of Godliness*, is the *Superstitious*.

The direct cause of all superstition, is a neglect of a *free and vigorous use of our reason or understanding*: So that ignorance is the parent of superstition, its guardian, and security. It comes
in,

in, it lives, and it prospers under its influence. And hence a false devotion, and the various sorts of affections which arise in the minds of men towards real or imaginary beings, falsely supposed divine; or towards the true God, from a false and unworthy conception of his character. Hence comes to pass a total destruction of the principles of rational piety, with their salutary and happy influences. Well regulated affections towards God, founded on just sentiments of his nature, are not only amiable and becoming; they are also of great importance to the conduct and happiness of life. But these affections are totally destroyed, or at least much weakened, by blind and violent superstitions. They shut out of the mind all rational apprehensions with respect to God, together with that security and confidence, that peace and satisfaction, which a good mind, when well informed, and blessed with a right *understanding in the way of Godliness*, finds in the practice of reasonable religion. But

But superstition rests not here : It proceeds generally to corrupt the consciences of men, and undermines the foundations of moral honesty and social virtue. The direful influence of superstition, in suppressing or perverting social instincts and affections, and defacing mens notions of moral good and evil, is well known to all who are acquainted with human nature, and with the history of the world. Hence that most monstrous abomination, the use of human sacrifices, offered up in honour of the Gods of the Gentiles ; a practice which no man, whose mind was not most dreadfully blinded and corrupted by superstition, could have thought of without horror. Hence also the wild fury of mens tearing or mangling their own bodies, or otherwise exposing themselves to various sufferings, under the notion of penance, and with a view of pacifying an offended God. These, and such like practices, are so directly contrary to the strongest instincts of our nature, that

that they damp all generous sentiments and dispositions in it. The direct tendency of superstition, even where it prevails only in a weaker degree, is to take too powerful a possession of the human mind, and fix its attention to insignificant objects. Trifling, low, and groveling notions, and zeal for the outward ceremonies of worship, and punctuality in the circumstantial of religion, are placed in the room of the cultivation of truly virtuous principles, the devotion of the heart, and a faithful discharge of the duties of life. The omission of some mere outward form, or ceremony, shall give the superstitious more uneasiness, than the neglect of moral duty; and when the form or ceremony is complied with, their consciences become quite easy, they feel no guilt for what is past, and are ready to contract new guilt, to be wiped off in the same manner.*

Bigotry

* What is related of some Roman Catholicks in a neighbouring Kingdom, will help to illustrate this, and give us

Bigotry and persecution is another deplorable instance of the great want of *understanding in the way of Godliness*. This accursed spirit has done an infinite prejudice to the tempers of men, and produced the greatest destruction and misery in human society. It has prompted men to promote, what they have called the honour of God, and the cause of his religion; but what was, in truth, the interest of wicked and designing men, and a system of gross and pernicious errors. And this has been done by all the methods of cruelty, treachery, and falsehood; by fire, sword, and devastation of countries; by imprisonments, racks, and tortures; by open seditions, dark conspiracies, and midnight massacres; by breach of the most solemn covenants and oaths; and by trampling under foot all the ties of conscience and humanity, and every religious

a clear idea of the nature of superstition. They broke into a house, robbed, plundered, and murdered the inhabitants, without remorse of conscience; but sitting down to regale themselves on the fruits of their villainy, their consciences would not let them taste flesh meat, because it was Friday.

gious and moral obligation. It is not easy to conceive how the human mind could consent to things so repugnant to the whole constitution of our nature, was it not first imposed upon, by some false appearance of religion, and brought to think it did God some acceptable service: And it is worthy of being remarked, that this bigotted narrowness of mind, this warm and intemperate zeal, this animosity and wrath, with all their attendant mischiefs, has generally been kindled on account of some dark and disputable opinions, some points or circumstances no way essential to religion; and, alas! too often for the sake of the grossest absurdities, which have been held as adorable mysteries, and divine truths, to which men thought themselves obliged to adhere, under the dreadful penalty of Damnation. When men arrive at this pitch of narrow-mindedness, they are confirmed and hardened in all their prepossessions, errors, and corruptions; they are shut

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up

up in total, incurable ignorance and depravity; and are in a state of the compleatest ruin that a human mind can be brought unto.

Another, and the last instance I shall mention, of want of *understanding in the way of Godliness*, is in the wild and senseless extravagancies of the *Enthusiastic*. History, and our own observation, will furnish us with instances of this kind in great abundance. The histories of the enthusiastic fooleries of former times are of so little use, as scarce to induce any to peruse them, were it not proper and expedient sometimes to draw a comparison between, and point out the striking likeness of, past and present enthusiasts: And this has been done by a masterly hand, in two well known capital instances, that of Methodism and Popery. And the drawing is so strong, and the features so like, in those two capital pictures, that it is not easy, but from the dates, to distinguish the copy from the original.*

Passing

* See the enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists compared, by the late BISHOP of EXETER.

Passing this by, I shall observe a likeness more pertinent to my present purpose; and that is, in the doctrines of our *modern enthusiasts*, and that of some of the patrons of infidelity above alluded to, with regard particularly to the discarding of our reason or understanding from the concerns of religion and godliness. I do not assert, nor even insinuate, that all Methodists are designedly combined with Infidels, in exposing religion to the contempt of mankind. All I purpose is, to shew the exact similarity and coincidence of their respective assertions, on this very material point, as a mere matter of fact; leaving it to those whom it most concerns, to account for the phenomenon.

To do this satisfactorily, let us recollect the principles of those most artful writers in favour of infidelity before mentioned. Their words in their writings, open to every one's inspection, are these, and the like:

“ A rational faith, *i. e.* an assent to

“ revealed truths, founded upon the
 “ conviction of the understanding, is
 “ a false and unwarrantable notion.
 “ That person best enjoys faith, who
 “ never asked himself one question
 “ about it, and never dealt at all in
 “ the evidence of reason.” This, and
 a great deal more to the same purpose,
 is advanced by them, with a view to
 prove, that God never intended that
 we should make use of our reason or
 intellectual faculty in believing; or that
 our faith should be founded upon any
 evidence which might convince our
 judgment, and make it reasonable for
 us to believe. Consequently, they as-
 sert that religion can never be a thing
 to be taught;—that the intellectual
 faculty cannot be the principle intended
 by God to lead us to true faith;—that
 there is a kind of power beyond what
 reason can furnish, such as brings con-
 viction or assurance to which human
 means is an utter stranger;—and there-
 fore, that if we do but once heartily
 believe, we need not concern ourselves
 about

about knowing upon what grounds we do so.

In all this, modern enthusiasts will be found to bear a most brotherly resemblance to modern infidels: And as they generally agree to discard the use of reason from religious matters, so, for that purpose, it is generally accompanied with the epithet of *carnal reason*. Hence their contempt of the ablest advocates for rational religion, who, in their phrase, are letter-learned divines, men of head-knowledge, polite reasoners, modern rabbies, and the like.

And as both these parties join their forces to remove all reasonable grounds of faith and religion, so do they unite in their representation of the principles on which they found it. Thus Infidels resolve their principles of true faith into a “ constant, particular revelation, “ imparted supernaturally to every individual.” They affirm, “ that the “ Holy Ghost irradiates the souls of “ believers at once with an irresistible “ light

“ light from heaven, that flashes con-
 “ viction in an instant. This renders
 “ all outward instruction, and even
 “ the Scriptures themselves, needless.”
 The assertions of Methodism amount
 to the same thing. Faith is said to be
 inspired, and not acquired. It is re-
 presented as the action of some spiri-
 tual being, darting sudden light and
 irresistible conviction into the mind.
 It is described as an effect instantaneously
 produced, so as to over-rule, not co-
 operate with human endeavours. “ Rea-
 “ son not with Satan, says one, but
 “ trust in the Lord with all thine heart.”
 Others talk of an immediate stroke of
 God’s convincing spirit, without any
 outward means at all: And they gene-
 rally agree in maintaining, that faith is
 a principle entirely implanted in the
 soul by the mighty power of God; in
 which, of course, our understanding
 and will can have nothing to do. It
 were endless to produce quotations to
 this purpose. And indeed the whole
 system of their conversions, regenera-
 tions,

tions, justifications, effectual callings, living faiths, and the like, is represented as events that happen suddenly, in a moment, and all of them depending on some inward impulses and impressions.

The time will not at present permit me to observe many more instances of this striking similarity in the sentiments of the opposers of revelation, and the wild pretenders to it. Suffice it briefly to remark their treatment of the holy Scriptures. The first call them, by way of contempt, *manuscript authorities*, and *paper revelations*, under pretence of exalting the influences of the spirit, or some inward light. And herein they are joined by high-flown enthusiasts, who have thought proper to give them the appellation of *a dead letter*. Both parties catch hold of detached passages and scraps, or particular expressions, violently torn from Scripture, to cover some indefensible tenet; and if it seems to do so only in sound, they regard not its real sense, meaning, and intention,

nor

nor the connection it bears to what precedes or follows. Instances innumerable might be collected to evince this: And it may with truth be affirmed, that no book in the world has suffered so much by such misrepresentations, as the Bible. It has been its fate to be misrepresented and undervalued alike both by those who have no religion at all, and by those that have carried religion up to madness and phrenzy.

Another mode of exposing holy writ, which these two sets of people have joined in, is, by endeavouring to turn the historical facts recorded therein to allegory. Infidels have daringly asserted, that the great facts recorded in the Gospel are to be understood in a mystical and allegorical sense. The history of our Saviour's miracles, particularly, have been thus treated; and the inference meant to be drawn from thence is, that the plain, literal, and historical, that is, the true and real sense, is false, absurd, and fictitious. Enthusiasts have done the same thing, only changing the name; and instead

stead of allegorizing, they call it spiritualizing the same facts. Their pretence may be, indulging a pious imagination, while they give an unbounded scope to the wild vagaries of a roving fancy, in order to surprize and catch the unwary and injudicious.

I hope I shall be held excusable, if, by way of illustration, I give an instance of this fanciful and very unfair treatment of holy writ, which lately happened very near this place. A whimsical expounder of Scripture, in the course of his harangue, happened to treat of the parable of the good Samaritan, and coming to the circumstance of the two pence given to the host, he, with a confidence equal to his wisdom, affirmed, that by the two pence, our Saviour meant the two Testaments, the Old and New. Had it suited so arbitrary an interpreter's purpose, he might, in perfect consistency with himself, have proceeded to another circumstance, wherein the Samaritan promised the host, *that whatsoever he should spend*
E more,

more, when he came again he would repay him ; and assert, that by it was meant the traditions of the Church, and an infallible guide at the head of it, as a promised supplement to whatever was deficient in the Old and New Testament, the supposed meaning of the two pence. So might a Papist chuse to comment ; and a Mahometan might, with equal propriety, contend that it alluded to the pretended revelation brought from heaven to the supplemental prophet Mahomet.

But it is clear to demonstration, that our blessed Lord had nothing of this kind in view. Every person endued with but a moderate share of judgment and understanding, will readily see, that in this, and all our Saviour's parables, there are many smaller incidents and circumstances inserted by way of ornament, and to compleat the narration ; and this elegance in their composition greatly distinguishes them from any thing of this kind that the world ever saw. Nor did he intend, nor is it at
all

all necessary, that the comparison should hold in every particular minute circumstance, but only that there should be a general likeness and propriety. So in the instance before us, to heighten and finish the benevolent character of the Samaritan, he is represented as neither sparing of his trouble nor money, in relieving the distressed Jew; and his paying the host two Denarii, or Roman pence, which is about fifteen pence of our money, is properly introduced, as it might be a sufficient compensation for his expence and trouble; especially when he added, that he would make what further satisfaction might be necessary at his return: Or else the circumstance of the two pence might give a delicate hint of the Samaritan's poverty, and place the benevolence of his disposition in a still stronger light.

It may be farther observed, that the character of the host, to whom the two pence were given, to reward him for his attendance and care of the wounded traveller, cannot with any propriety be

applicable to mankind who have received the revelation of God's will, contained in the two Testaments. They never could have made such a claim as a reward for any service; and indeed this special favour is always represented as the sole effect of the free and unmerited goodness and condescension of the Father Almighty to a sinful world.

Thus have the parables of our Saviour, which we may safely pronounce to be the finest compositions of the kind that we know of, been miserably burlesqued and twisted into every fanciful meaning that a heated imagination might suggest. And not only his parables, but the plain historical accounts of his miracles and actions, have suffered the like fate, and been in like manner allegorized, sublimated, or spiritualized from their literal sense, by those licentious interpreters.

But leaving all such idle extravagancies, by which Infidels or Enthusiasts have so injuriously tortured and misapplied the words and actions of our blessed Saviour, and the other sacred
writers,

writers, so as to make them countenance various absurdities, which serve to expose the sacred oracles to contempt; we may briefly observe, that since we find an unaccountable combination of men of very discordant principles, tending to undermine the fair fabric of Christianity; since there appear such united endeavours in men of opposite characters to deprive it of its only firm and stable foundation, a rational, intelligible evidence and proof; since the sly unbeliever and the ignorantly zealous Christian join in substituting, in the room of this firm basis, false and fallacious supports, such as sudden feelings, impetuous transports, and fantastical raptures, which after all may be nothing more than the fumes of the imagination, the effects of a disordered mind, or a distempered body; since this is the case, we have all the reason in the world to endeavour to get our minds well informed in the important principles of Christianity, and to have a right *understanding in the way*
of

of Godliness. Instead of depending on any extraordinary revelations or impulses, divine pretences, familiar communications with God, special directions, missions, or calls, let us make a good use of the common means afforded us;—let us read, learn, and exercise our reason in the study of the holy Scriptures, and draw our religious principles from that fountain of living waters, and by that means build up ourselves in our most holy faith.

And if it is the duty of every one who calls himself a Christian, to enquire into the grounds and reasons upon which his religion stands, and endeavour to gain consistent and satisfactory sentiments of its nature, it is still more evidently the duty of Christians of superior talents, whose obligations increase in this respect in proportion to their opportunities and advantages for satisfying themselves of the truth of the gospel, and for knowing every thing necessary for the support of it.

Here I am unavoidably led to observe,
that

that it is most of all incumbent on the teachers of Christianity to be well instructed in the grounds of their religion, and to have a clear *understanding in the way of Godliness*, and in all things necessary to prove or defend their faith. Those who have peculiarly devoted themselves to the work of propagating and inculcating the doctrines of the gospel, can never be ignorant in matters which affect the truth of it, without the most shameful absurdity. Nor can they apply their time and talents to so good a purpose, or so suitably to their situation, as to turn them to the study of religion. And whatever other useful knowledge or mental accomplishments we may have acquired, it will be our wisdom and understanding in the sight of every person of discernment in the value of characters, to make them subservient to the great design of our profession.

One advantage of this kind I am led by my subject to mention, and that is the knowledge of the language in which the genuine records of Christianity were originally written. By a due application of this advantage,

tage, we shall be best able to avoid that fruitful source of error above alluded to, the taking the mere sound of a word or phrase in a translation for the standard of its sense; for numberless instances may be adduced of great want of accuracy and precision in translating many words of considerable importance in the Christian system. To be properly qualified to instruct others herein, we should labour for an accurate knowledge of the sentiments of the New Testament writers from their own words, and get acquainted with the manners and customs which then prevailed. We must not depend on supernatural accomplishments, but, as St. Paul directs Timothy, *give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; to meditate on and exercise ourselves in these things; to give ourselves wholly unto them, that our profiting might appear to all.* And then, as worthy advocates for the cause of genuine Christianity and rational Religion, we must endeavour, with the words of truth and soberness, with meek, calm, and benevolent disposition, *to convince gain-sayers, and establish our fellow Christians, as well as ourselves, in the true faith of the gospel.*

Thus we shall recommend ourselves to the great Shepherd of Souls; and may each hope for that most comfortable sentence, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, be ruler over many things; enter thou unto the joy of thy Lord.*

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen.

20 NO 65

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